

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 20089 131405Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-15 DHA-02 ACDA-10 /102 W
----- 109531 /53

P R 131348Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8679
INFO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS

UNCLAS LONDON 20089

GENEVA FOR WISNER

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK
SUBJECT: FINANCIAL TIMES ARTICLE

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY BRIDGET BLOOM APPEARED IN THE
DECEMBER 13 EDITION OF THE FINANCIAL TIMES UNDER THE
TITLE, "U.K. TO PRESENT NEW RHODESIA FORMULA".
BEGIN TEXT: THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS NOW READY TO PUT
FORWARD COMPROMISE PROPOSALS FOR A RHODESIA SETTLEMENT
WHICH WOULD INVOLVE A MUCH GREATER ROLE FOR BRITAIN IN
AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT THAN MINISTERS, UNTIL VERY
RECENTLY, HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO CONTEMPLATE.
AN OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSALS MAY BE GIVEN TO PARLIA-
MENT TOMORROW, WHEN MR. ANTHONY CROSLAND, THE FOREIGN
SECRETARY, MAKES HIS EXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AD-
JOURNMENT FOR CHRISTMAS OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.
AN EARLY ADJOURNMENT HAS BEEN EXPECTED BY DELEGATES
SINCE LATE LAST WEEK AND MR. SMITH, THE RHODESIAN
LEADER, LAST NIGHT LEFT GENEVA FOR HOME, FOLLOWING A
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MEETING WITH MR. IVOR RICHARD, THE CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN.

BISHOP MUZOREWA IS ALREADY IN RHODESIA.

FULL DETAILS OF THE NEW BRITISH PROPOSALS HOWEVER WILL PROBABLY EMERGE ONLY AS CONSULTATIONS PROCEED DURING THE ADJOURNMENT WITH THE AFRICAN AND WHITE RHODESIAN DELEGATIONS, WITH THE U.S., AND WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND THE FRONTLINE AFRICAN STATES.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ACCEPTANCE THAT IT MUST NOW TAKE A MORE POSITIVE STAND STEMS FROM THE CONCLUSION, ENDORSED IN WEEKEND TALKS WITH DR. KISSINGER, THE OUTGOING U.S. SECRETARY, THAT THE BEST HOPE OF SAVING THE SETTLEMENT INITIATIVE FROM COLLAPSE IS A CENTRAL BRITISH ROLE IN AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT.

IN OUTLINE, THE PROPOSALS ENVISAGE A BRITISH POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRESENCE, IN THE FORM OF A GOVERNOR GENERAL-TYPE FIGURE AND STAFF.

TO BE NEGOTIATED, HOWEVER, ARE THE CRUCIAL AREAS OF LAW AND ORDER AND DEFENSE, WHICH COULD INVOLVE BRITISH--OR COMMONWEALTH--MILITARY PERSONNEL BUT ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT TROOPS.

THE KEY TO WHETHER SUCH PROPOSALS COULD PRODUCE A SETTLEMENT IS THOUGHT TO LIE IN THE ATTITUDE OF MR. SMITH, WHO HAS NOW BEEN CLEARLY TOLD THAT HIS VERSION OF THE KISSINGER PLAN AS A NON-NEGOTIABLE CONTRACT, IS NOW DEAD.

BRITAIN PROBABLY WILL NOW TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN DISCUSSING THE NEW PROPOSALS WITH THE AFRICAN DELEGATIONS AND THE FRONTLINE PRESIDENTS, AND MAY SEND SENIOR EMIS-SARIES TO AFRICA DURING THE CONFERENCE RECESS.

THE ROLE OF THE U.S. IS STILL SEEN AS CRITICAL, FOR THE NEW PROPOSALS WILL HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED WITH THE RHODESIANS THEMSELVES, AND WITH SOUTH AFRICA. SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS ARE TO RETURN TO LONDON THIS WEEK FOR DISCUSSIONS ON TACTICS AND STRATEGY.

MEANWHILE, MR. RICHARD SEEMS LIKELY TO PROPOSE AN ADJOURNMENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON TUESDAY. THIS IS NOT THOUGHT LIKELY TO CAUSE PROBLEMS, ALTHOUGH MR. NKOMO AND MR. MUGABE, JOINT LEADERS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, WILL INSIST THAT THE DELAY DOES NOT PREJUDICE THE AGREED INDEPENDENCE TIMETABLE.

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AS HE LEFT GENEVA LAST NIGHT, MR. SMITH SAID THAT HE HOPED AN ADJOURNMENT MIGHT BRING "MORE SANITY" TO THE CONFERENCE.

ASKED ABOUT A POSSIBLE BRITISH MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND LAW AND ORDER, MR. SMITH SAID THAT IT WAS A "GHASTLY THOUGHT." END TEXT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, MAGAZINES, DEPENDENCIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LONDON20089
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760458-1175
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761249/aaaabpyj.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: schwenja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAY 2004 by hattaycs>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by schwenja>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FINANCIAL TIMES ARTICLE THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY BRIDGET BLOOM APPEARED IN THE DECEMBER 13 EDITION OF THE FINANCIAL TIMES UNDER T
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006